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AUTHOR	Frankel, Edward
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ABSTRACT

Traditional grading was replaced with the Honors-Pass-Fail (H-P-F) grading system in graduate education courses at Herbert H. Lehman College in the fall 1971 semester. The purpose of that action was to determine if the H-P-F system might differentiate more effectively between exceptional and average student achievement. The general findings of the study, which assesses and compares the two systems as barometers of student achievement and evaluates student and faculty reactions to the H-P-F system, are as follows: a) the H-P-F system discriminates more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement than the A-B-C-F system; b) almost three out of four graduate education students who were graded under the system approved it; c) more than half of the instructors who used the H-P-F system and three-quarters of those who did not approved the H-P-F grading system. (Tables included in this report show a comparison of grade distributions for the two systems and faculty and student response to the H-P-F system.) (Related document is SP 006 980.) (JA)

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HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE
The City University of New York
Bedford Park Boulevard West
Bronx, New York 10468

COMPARISON OF A-B-C-F AND H-P-F GRADING SYSTEMS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES AT HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE

Edward Frankel

Final Complete Report

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COMPARISON OF A-B-C-F AND H-P-F GRADING SYSTEMS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES AT HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE

The H-P-F grading system experimentally replaced the traditional A-B-C-F grading system in graduate education courses at Herbert H. Lehman College in the fall, 1971 semester, to determine if it might differentiate more effectively between exceptional and average student achievement. The general findings of the study, which assesses and compares the two systems as barometers of student achievement and which evaluates student and faculty reactions to the H-P-F system are as follows:

1. The H-P-F system discriminates more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement than the A-B-C-F system.

2. Almost three out of four graduate education students who were graded under the system approved it.

3. More than half the instructors who used the H-P-F system and three quarters of those who did not, approved the H-P-F grading system.

Background: Implementation of H-P-F

At the January 6, 1971 meeting of the Education Department, Dr. Irwin Sollinger proposed to change the grading system for graduate education in the following motion:

> "For the spring semester 1971 the following grading system be implemented in the graduate division of the Education Department: 10% or less of each class receive grade H, the remainder of the class receive either P or F grade, and that at our first meeting in September, 1971, we review the grading system and vote again as to whether to continue to use it."

Though the proposal had been accepted by the Graduate Coordinating Committee and endorsed by Dean John W. Wieler and Dean Mary Jane Kingkade, action on the motion was deferred until the next meeting since a quorum was not present. In the interim, Professor Sollinger was asked to send a memo to the department to explain the proposal's rationale, giving the faculty a chance to consider the matter.

Professor Sollinger submitted the following detailed memo, "Proposal for Grading System," in March, 1971:

"I propose, in order to emphasize learning rather than competition, that Lehman College-Education Department adopt the Honors/Pass/Fail grading system, a system that should apply to all graduate students for the Fall, 1971 semester, and then be reviewed in February, 1972 by Lehman College-Education Department.

These grades will not be translatable into the numerical index commonly used with the ABCDF scale, since the units in the two scales convey different ranges and definitions of quality. Transcripts therefore are complemented by the letters of recommendation, in files, by scores on standardized tests, and by an interpretive statement of the HPF system as it is to be used at Lehman. For your information and guidance, this is what the different grades signify:

H = Honors: This grade is awarded for genuine intellectual or creative performance, and/or for superlative mastery of the assigned work.

P = Pass: This means that the student has done the assigned work and demonstrated a sufficient mastery of it.

F = Fail: Assignment of this grade denotes that the student has failed to do a significant portion of the assigned work, or has been unable to demonstrate a sufficient mastery of it.

I = Incomplete: This grade may be given by your instructor to allow you to make up or redo work before the final grade is posted. Work in fulfillment of an incomplete must be submitted by a specified date. (See calendar in bulletin.) If you have not completed your work by that date, the incomplete will be counted as an F.

In addition, these grades are being used:

Y = Year course. This denotes a year's course and is given only at the end of the first half of a two-semester sequence;

W = Withdrawal without academic penalty; and

X = Withdrawal after the specified date and as a result of unsatisfactory work. An X is the equivalent of an F in determining academic standing.

Academic Probation

A full-time student who has received either two or more F's or X's in one semester, or at least one in each of two succeeding semesters, without having received H's for at least an equal number of credits during these same semesters, will be placed on probation and notified accordingly.

Students on academic probation may not take more than 12 credits per semester. Academic probation lasts for a minimum of 12 credits (over one or more semesters) during which time the student must receive no F's or X's unbalanced by H's; if he does, he will be dismissed for poor scholarship. The happier alternative is the satisfactory completion of 12 credits which will remove him from probation. Any probationary student who earns a grade of Inc may not register until his make-up work has been submitted and a grade has been transmitted to the Registrar's Office.[1]

At the March 31, 1971 meeting of the Department of Education, Professor Sollinger introduced the following resolution which was adopted:

"Be it moved that the grades of H-P-F be used for all graduate courses in the Department of Education for the Fall, 1971, semester and that this decision be reviewed for February, 1972."

At the Lehman College Senate meeting of September 22, 1971, Dean Kingkade moved to approve the institution of an H-P-F grading system in graduate Education courses for the fall, 1971 semester. Dean Glen T. Nygreen also requested that a student evaluation be considered for continuation of the grading system beyond that semester. A request by the Department of Education to extend the H-P-F system for the spring and summer of 1972 was approved at the April 26, 1971 meeting of the Lehman College Senate Committee on Graduate Study, with the provision that the results of a graduate student evaluation (mandated by the Lehman College Senate) be reported to the committee early in the fall, 1972 semester. On May 3, 1972 the Lehman College Senate granted the Department of Education an extention of the H-P-F system for the spring semester and summer session of 1972.

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[1]Paraphrased in the Richmond College-Student Handbook, 1970/71.

I. COMPARISON OF THE A-B-C-F AND H-P-F GRADING SYSTEMS

The A-B-C-F grading system has evaluated student performance in graduate courses since the creation of the Lehman College Graduate Studies Program on July 1, 1968. The following ratings are used:

Grades	Administrative Ratings
A = 90-100 percent	R - attendance credit
B = 80-89 percent	W - official withdrawal during the first eight weeks of a course
C = 70-79 percent	F - unofficial withdrawal
F = 0-69 percent	Abs - absent from final examination
	Inc - incomplete class work

For the meaning and significance of the H-P-F designations see Dr. Sollinger's memo of March, 1971 (page 2).

Graduate Courses in Education

To provide some background on the graduate courses in education, an analysis was made of the number of courses, sections, grades, average number of grades per section (class registers), and average grade for each regular school semester since fall, 1968. These data are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

GRADUATE COURSES IN EDUCATION

Year	Number of Courses	Number of Sections	Number of Grades	Average Number Grades per Sections
Fall 1968	21	48	1540	32.1
Spring 1969	25	58	1231	21.2
Fall 1969	34	73	1611	22.1
Spring 1970	32	74	1543	20.8
Fall 1970	47	100	1903	19.0
Spring 1971	45	104	1742	16.7
Fall 1971	48	123	1734	14.1
Spring 1972	49	120	1954	16.3

Source: Office of Dean of Graduate Studies

Table I shows that there has been an increase in the number of graduate education courses given in TEP. From fall, 1968 to spring, 1972, the number has more than doubled, and the number of sections has followed the same pattern. The number of grades has tended to increase but with some fluctuations; fall registrations though larger than spring registrations for the first three years were smaller in 1971-72. The average number of grades per section has become progressively smaller over the years--in 1971-72 the class registers were the lowest in four years. As the number of sections has increased, the average number of grades per section (class register) has decreased.

Grade Distribution in the A-B-C-F and the H-P-F Grading Systems

The distribution of grades in graduate courses with A-B-C-F and H-P-F grading systems are given in Tables II and III.

TABLE II

A-B-C-F GRADE DISTRIBUTION IN GRADUATE COURSES IN EDUCATION

Semester	Average Grade	A No.	A %	B No.	B %	C No.	C %	F No.	F %	J No.	J %	Inc No.	Inc %	W No.	W %	Abs No.	Abs %
Fall 1968	3.40	636	41.3	740	48.1	51	3.3	4	0.3	0	0.0	13	0.8	83	5.4	13	0.8
Spring 1969	3.47	553	44.9	578	47.0	15	1.2	0	0.0	6	0.5	5	0.4	68	5.5	6	0.5
Fall 1969	3.37	650	40.3	888	55.1	43	2.7	0	0.0	5	0.3	16	1.0	7	0.5	2	0.1
Spring 1970	3.54	818	53.0	654	42.4	16	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	15	1.0	36	2.3	3	0.2
Fall 1970	3.51	942	49.5	776	40.8	13	0.7	0	0.0	13	0.7	108	5.7	47	2.5	4	0.2
Spring 1971	3.52	924	53.0	719	41.3	15	0.9	0	0.0	11	0.6	56	3.2	13	0.7	4	0.2

Source: Reports from Office of Institutional Research: No. 71-2, May, 1971 and No. 72-4, May, 1972

Table II reveals that the grade point average in education courses in the A-B-C-F grading system has tended to rise. This conforms with the findings of a national survey of grading practices in 435 colleges and universities.[2] At Lehman, the grade point average was at its lowest and highest within the same school year, 1969-70.

The distribution of grades for the first three semesters showed more B than A grades (6.8 percent more for fall, 1968; 2.1 percent for spring, 1969; and 14.8 percent for fall, 1969). However, in the last three semesters this pattern was reversed (10.6 percent more A's than B's for spring, 1970; 8.7 percent for fall, 1970; and 11.7 percent for spring, 1971). Very few C grades were issued; the most occurred in fall, 1968, and fewest in fall, 1970. F grades were posted only in the fall, 1968 semester (0.3 percent of graduate education students). Generally speaking, 90.0 percent or more of all grades

[2]Letter of March, 1971 from Office of Institutional Research, San Francisco State College, San Francisco.

were either A or B during the three years when the A-B-C-F system was used, (89.4 percent, 91.9 percent, 95.4 percent, 95.4 percent, 90.3 percent, and 94.3 percent, respectively.

TABLE III

H-P-F GRADE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION COURSES
1971-72

Semester	Total No.	H		P		F		Inc		W	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Fall 1971	1734	358	20.6	1236	71.3	2	0.1	112	6.5	26	1.5
Spring 1972	1954	690	35.3	1172	60.0	13	0.7	57	2.9	22	1.1

Source: Office of Dean of Graduate Studies, Herbert H. Lehman College

Table III indicates that almost twice as many students were rated H in the spring, 1972 semester as in the fall, 1971 semester--a rise of 14.7 percent. At the TEP Graduate Program of Richmond College where H-P-F has been used since fall, 1969, the percentage of H grades over the past several semesters has also increased (from about 20.0 percent in fall, 1969 to 23.0 percent in fall, 1970 to 30.0 percent in fall, 1971).[3]

At Lehman, the percentage of P grades declined 11.3 percent. The greater number of Inc. in the fall than in the spring represents the time lag (one year) in which students may remove an Inc. by completing course requirements.

Comparison of A-B-C-F and H-P-F Grading Systems

Grade distribution for graduate education courses using A-B-C-F during 1970-71 was compared with those using H-P-F during 1971-72. These data are presented by curricular areas which are designated by the following initials:

[3]Letter of October 13, 1972 from Dr. Philip A. Alsworth, Associate Chairman, Division of Professional Studies, Teacher Education, Richmond College, New York.

EDE: courses in general education, including reading;
EDC: courses in early childhood education;
EDM: courses in secondary education;
EDS: courses in special education (learning disabilities and mental retardation);
EDG: courses in counseling and guidance;
EDX: courses in connection with special projects (Team Teaching Training Project).

Table IV summarizes data on grade distribution by curricular areas for fall, 1970 (A-B-C-F grading system in use) and fall, 1971 (H-P-F grading system in use).

TABLE IV

GRADE DISTRIBUTION IN GRADUATE COURSES IN EDUCATION

Fall, 1970

	No. of Sections	Total No.	A		B		C		F		Others*	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
EDC	6	157	110	70.1	39	24.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	5.1
EDE	69	1357	682	50.3	564	41.6	10	0.7	0	0.0	101	7.4
EDG	9	197	77	39.1	81	41.1	1	0.5	0	0.0	38	19.3
EDM	1	9	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
EDS	6	93	41	44.1	44	47.3	2	2.2	0	0.0	6	6.4
EDX	9	90	25	27.8	46	51.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	19	21.1
Total	100	1903	942	49.5	776	40.8	13	0.7	0	0.0	172	9.0

Fall, 1971

	No. of Sections	Total No.	H		P		F		Others*	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
EDC	8	154	62	40.3	90	58.4	0	0.0	2	1.3
EDE	85	1234	264	21.4	896	72.6	0	0.0	74	6.0
EDG	12	171	19	11.1	110	64.3	0	0.0	42	24.6
EDM	2	11	0	0.0	11	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
EDS	7	73	6	8.2	62	84.9	0	0.0	5	6.9
EDX	9	91	7	7.7	67	73.6	2	2.2	15	16.5
Total	123	1734	358	20.6	1236	71.3	2	0.1	138	8.0

*Includes J, Abs., P, Inc., and W.

Table IV indicates that in the fall, 1970 semester 49.5 percent of all the grades for graduate courses in education were A; 40.8 percent, B; 0.7 percent, C; no Fs; and 9.0 percent, Others.[4] The highest percentage of A's occurred in EDC courses, the lowest in EDX. EDE, which accounted for 70.0 percent of all graduate grades in education, posted 50.3 percent A grades.

In fall, 1971, under the H-P-F grading system, there were 20.6 percent H's, 71.3 percent P's, and 8.0 percent Others.[5] The highest percentage of H grades occurred in EDC. There were no H grades in EDM courses (with only two sections and 11 grades posted), and EDE again constituted 70.0 percent of all the grades in education with 21.4 percent H grades.

There was a sharp decline in the total number of "highest possible grades" from the fall, 1970 semester to the fall, 1971 semester, a difference of 28.9 percent. Also, fewer H than A grades were given in each curricular area: EDC dropped by 29.8 percent; EDE by 28.9 percent; EDG by 28.0 percent; EDM by 77.8 percent; EDS by 35.9 percent; and EDX by 20.1 percent.

The Dean of Graduate Studies' memorandum of February 7, 1972, in which the A-B-C-F grading system for fall, 1970 and the H-P-F grading system for fall, 1971 were compared, stated: "The data appear to indicate that the experiment has been successful. . . .The statistics show that not only did the department as a whole grant roughly 30.0 percent fewer H grades in 1971 than A grades in the previous year, but also that each of the curriculum showed a corresponding drop off in number of 'highest possible grades' granted."

Table V summarizes data on grade distribution by curricular areas for spring, 1971 (A-B-C-F in use) and spring, 1972 (H-P-F in use).

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[4]The breakdown of "Others" for fall, 1970, was J - 13 or 0.7 percent, Abs. - four or 0.2 percent, P - 0, Inc. - 108 or 5.7 percent, and W - 47 or 2.5 percent.

[5]The breakdown of "Others" for fall, 1971, was J - 0, Inc. - 112 or 6.5 percent, and W - 26 or 1.5 percent.

TABLE V

GRADE DISTRIBUTION IN GRADUATE COURSES IN EDUCATION

Spring, 1971

	No. of Sections	Total No.	A No.	A %	B No.	B %	C No.	C %	F No.	F %	Others* No.	Others* %
EDC	6	143	111	77.6	27	18.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	3.5
EDE	72	1240	647	52.2	532	42.9	8	0.6	0	0.0	53	4.2
EDG	8	154	69	44.8	74	48.1	2	1.3	0	0.0	9	5.8
EDS	9	113	55	48.7	51	45.1	4	3.5	0	0.0	3	2.7
EDX	9	92	42	45.7	35	38.0	1	1.1	0	0.0	14	15.3
Total	104	1742	924	53.0	719	41.3	15	0.9	0	0.0	84	4.8

Spring, 1972

	No. of Sections	Total No.	H No.	H %	P No.	P %	F No.	F %	Others* No.	Others* %
EDC	7	165	86	52.1	75	45.5	1	0.6	3	1.8
EDE	79	1320	510	38.6	740	56.1	9	0.7	61	4.6
EDG	14	225	26	11.6	191	84.9	1	0.4	7	3.1
EDI	4	61	32	52.4	29	47.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
EDS	8	98	23	23.5	67	68.4	2	2.0	6	6.1
EDX	8	85	13	15.3	70	82.4	0	0.0	2	2.3
Total	120	1954	690	35.3	1172	60.0	13	0.7	79	4.0

*Includes J, Abs., Inc., and W.

Table V reveals that in the spring, 1971 semester 53.0 percent of all grades were A's. The highest percentage of A's occurred in EDC, and the lowest in EDG courses. In EDE courses which contributed over 70.0 percent of all the graduate grades, 52.2 percent were A's.

In the spring, 1972 semester 35.3 percent of all grades were H's. The greatest percentage of H grades occurred in EDI courses, the lowest in EDG courses. EDE courses, which contributed about 68.0 percent of all grades, posted 38.6 percent H grades.

In comparing "highest possible grades" in the spring, 1971 and spring, 1972 semesters, there was a significant difference of 17.7 percent. Fewer H than A grades were registered in each curricular area: EDC dropped 25.5 percent; EDE decreased 13.6 percent; EDG declined 33.2 percent; EDS dropped 25.2 percent; and EDX showed a decline of 30.4 percent. The greatest decline was in EDG, the smallest in EDE.

The number of classes in which all students received A's during the 1970-71 semesters was compared to the number of classes in which all students received H's during 1971-72 semesters. Table VI summarizes these data.

TABLE VI

CLASSES IN WHICH ALL STUDENTS RECEIVED HIGHEST POSSIBLE GRADES

Fall 1970		Spring 1971		Fall 1971		Spring 1972	
	A		A		H		H
EDE 700-5	21	EDC 770-1	21	EDE 701-4	6	EDE 703-1	24
EDE 703-2	24	EDE 700-4	16	EDE 721-3	14	EDE 721-4	15
EDE 705-2	16	EDE 700-6	6	EDG 709-2	4	EDE 725-3	14
EDE 706-1	12	EDE 700-7	15			EDE 768-1	7
EDE 706-2	6	EDE 721-2	14			EDE 799-1	17
EDE 726-2	15	EDE 721-3	18				
EDE 730-1	14	EDS 715-1	15				
EDE 790-7	12	EDS 723-1	4				
EDE 791-3	7						
EDS 714-1	19						
Total 10	146	8	109	3	24	5	77

Table VI shows that in the fall, 1970 semester there were ten classes in which all students received a grade of A, a total of 146. In the fall, 1971

semester there were three classes in which all students received a grade of H, a total of 24. The spring, 1971 semester showed eight classes with 109 students, all of whom received A's, as compared to the spring, 1972 semester when five classes of 77 students all received H's. The two grading systems did not produce substantially different numbers of sections and students receiving A grades in fall, 1970 and spring, 1971 as compared to H grades in fall, 1971 and spring, 1972 semesters.

Summary

It appears that using the H grade rather than the A grade, to discriminate between the exceptional and the average student, was more effective during the fall, 1971 semester than in the spring, 1972 semester. Nevertheless, the H-P-F grading system did yield less "highest possible grades" than the A-B-C-F grading system, fulfilling its purpose---discrimination between exceptional and average student achievement in graduate education courses.

II. STUDENT EVALUATION OF H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

In preparation for student balloting, a letter was sent on September 20, 1972 to all staff members who taught graduate courses in education. It informed them of the mandated evaluation which was to take place during the week of October 2, 1972, and gave specific directives for the distribution, collection, and tallying of student responses.

An envelope containing student questionnaires and a tally sheet was prepared for each of the 113 graduate education classes. The questions asked were:

1. The number of graduate courses completed prior to September, 1972.
2. Number of graduate courses graded H-P-F.
3. Your reaction to H-P-F grading system:

   approve___; disapprove___; uncertain___.

4. If you disapprove or are uncertain what alternatives would you prefer:

A-B-C-F system___; P-F system___; Others___.

Only students who had participated in the H-P-F system last year were asked to complete the questionnaire. Returned envelopes were checked by the Office of Educational Research and a summary of the responses to the four inquiries was prepared.

Population

Responses were received from 83 classes, or 73.5 percent of the total number of graduate education classes. There were 765 respondents, representing 43.7 percent of the total graduate population (approximately 1,750 students enrolled in one or more graduate education courses). However, since only those students who were graded by the H-P-F system were asked to respond, the number of eligible respondents was about 1,150.[7] Of these, 66.5 percent completed the questionnaire.

All curricular areas in education were represented: nine of the ten EDC classes, 48 of the 69 EDE classes, 12 of the 17 EDG classes, three of the six EDI classes, three of the three EDM classes, and eight of the eight EDS classes.[8] The sample was representative of the total population with respect to curricular areas in education.

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[7]The total TEP enrollment for fall, 1972 was 1,391, of whom 467 were new entrants. Hence, the number of eligible TEP students was 924. The total number of enrolled non-matriculants in fall, 1972 was 380, of whom 145 were new entrants. Thus, 235 students were enrolled in graduate studies prior to September, 1972. The assistant registrar estimated that 95 percent of all non-matriculants were enrolled in education courses, or about 220 students. Thus, the total eligible graduate population was 924 and 220 students or about 1,150 students.

[8]Chi square value for distribution was 1.81 which is not significant.

Survey Results

The responses to the first question are summarized in Table VII.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES COMPLETED PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER, 1972

No. of Courses	Total No.	%
1 - 2	189	24.7
3 - 4	169	22.1
5 - 6	132	17.2
more than 6	275	36.0
	765	100.0

Table VII indicates that more than half the respondents had completed more than four courses, and 36.0 percent had completed more than six courses.

Table VIII summarizes the responses to the second question.

TABLE VIII

NUMBER OF COURSES GRADED H-P-F

No. of Courses	Total No.	%
one	173	22.6
two	183	23.9
three	123	16.1
four or more	286	37.4
	765	100.0

Table VIII shows that all respondents had been rated by the H-P-F system in at least one course. Almost half had received H-P-F ratings in one or two courses, and 37.4 percent were rated by H-P-F in four or more courses.

Reactions of graduate students to the third question on the H-P-F grading system are summarized in Table IX.

TABLE IX

REACTIONS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

Reactions	Total No.	%
Approve	557	72.8
Disapprove	124	16.2
Uncertain	84	11.0
	765	100.0

Table IX shows that 72.8 percent of the respondents approved of the H-P-F grading system, 16.2 percent disapproved, and 11.0 percent were uncertain.

For question four, regarding alternative systems of grading, the choice of the 208 students who either disapproved or were uncertain about the H-P-F system was as follows:

106 or 51.0 percent preferred the A-B-C-F system;

89 or 42.8 percent preferred the P-F system; and

13 or 6.2 percent opted for some other method of grading.

Student suggestions for "other systems of grading" fell into two categories: (1) no grading and (2) student choice of the grading system.

III. FACULTY EVALUATION OF H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

The faculty of the Education Department was polled during the week of October 9, 1972 to determine their reactions to the H-P-F grading system.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was mailed to all full-time and part-time faculty members; a followup questionnaire was sent a week later to those who did not respond. Responses were sought to four inquiries:

1. Number of graduate courses taught in which H-P-F grading system was used in 1971-72:

   none___ one___ two___ three___ four___ five___ six___

2. If you taught one or more courses, indicate the number in each of the following curricular areas:

3. Your reactions to H-P-F grading system: check one:

   approve___, disapprove___, uncertain___

4. If you disapprove or are uncertain what alternatives would you prefer? check one: (a) A-B-C-F system__ (b) P-F system__ (c) others_____ ___
   indicate

In contrast to the student poll where only those who had been graded by H-P-F were asked to respond, all faculty were asked to complete the questionnaire.

Population

Anonymous responses were received from 97 of the 114 faculty members polled, or 85.1 percent---almost nine out of ten returned completed questionnaires. An attempt to determine how representative the sample was of the total population was limited by the failure of 22 or 22.7 percent respondents to identify themselves as part-time or full-time faculty for purposes of analysis as instructed. Among the 75 respondents identified, 63 were full-time and 12 part-time faculty, 84.0 percent and 16.0 percent, respectively.

Table X posts the total numbers of faculty who had taught graduate courses last year, as well as the total number of respondents in each of these categories.

TABLE X

FACULTY RESPONDENTS TO H-P-F QUESTIONNAIRE

	Total Staff	Respondents		Chi Square	P
Graduate Courses Taught	No.	No.	%		
At least one	69	67	97.1		
None	45	30	66.7	19.94	.01
	114	97	85.1		

Table X shows that 97.1 percent of the respondents had taught at least one graduate course last year, and, therefore, used the H-P-F grading system versus 66.7 percent who had not taught graduate courses and had not had experience with this system. Significantly, more graduate than nongraduate course teachers responded to the questionnaire. Among the responses from nongraduate instructors to the poll was a reluctance to answer the questions; they felt they could not respond since they had had no experience with this grading system.

Responses to the first question are summarized in Table XI.

TABLE XI

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT
IN WHICH H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM WAS USED IN 1971-72

	Number of Graduate Classes Taught								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Total One or More	Grand Total
Number	30	15	29	9	6	3	5	67	97
Percentage	30.9	15.5	29.9	9.3	6.2	3.1	5.1	69.1	100.0

Table XI indicates that 30.9 percent of the respondents had not taught graduate classes, and 69.1 percent had taught one or more. 29.9 percent of the

respondents had taught two graduate classes, representing almost half of all the courses taught (45.4 percent) with an average of 2.5 graduate classes per instructor.

Areas of the Graduate Curriculum

The kinds and numbers of courses taught by graduate instructors, in terms of curricular areas, were analyzed to determine their distribution. These data are given in Table XII.

TABLE XII

NUMBER OF GRADUATE COURSES BY CURRICULAR AREAS OFFERED AND NUMBER TAUGHT BY RESPONDENTS

Courses	EDC	EDE	EDG	EDM	EDS	Total	Chi Square
No. offered	10	69	17	3	8	107	1.99
No. taught	7	45	8	2	5	67	
Percentage	70.0	65.2	47.1	66.7	62.5	62.6	

Table XII shows that 107 classes were offered in five TEP curricular areas; 62.6 percent were taught by graduate instructors responding to the questionnaire. The proportion of courses taught in the five curricular areas varied from 70.0 percent EDC to 47.1 percent EDG. About two-thirds (65.2 percent) of all the 69 EDE courses offered was taught by the respondents.

There was no significant difference between the number of courses taught as compared to the number not taught in each of the five areas, indicating that the distribution of the responses could be considered representative of TEP offerings.

Reactions to H-P-F System

The reaction of the faculty to the H-P-F grading system are given in Table XIII.

TABLE XIII

REACTIONS OF FACULTY TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	Graduate Teachers		Non Graduate Teachers		Total		Chi Square	p
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Approve	34	50.8	21	70.0	55	56.7		
Disapprove	26	38.8	5	16.7	31	32.0	5.1	n.s.
Uncertain	7	10.4	4	13.3	11	11.3		
Total	67	100.0	30	100.0	97	100.0		

Table XIII reveals that 67 or 69.1 percent of the respondents had used the H-P-F grading system and 30 or 30.9 percent had not, since they had not instructed graduate courses last year. 56.7 percent of all respondents approved the H-P-F grading system; 50.8 percent of those who had taught graduate courses last year and had used H-P-F as compared to 70.0 percent of staff members who had not taught graduate courses supported it -- a difference of 19.2 percent. However, there was no statistical significance between the two groups with respect to the relative numbers who approved versus the numbers who disapproved or were uncertain since the chi square value was 5.1. Disapproval came from 38.8 percent of staff members who had used H-P-F and from 16.7 percent of those who had not, an average of 32.0 percent. Uncertain responses by 10.4 percent of the graduate instructors and 13.3 percent of nongraduate instructors were recorded.

Alternative Systems

The alternatives to the H-P-F system chosen by those faculty members who either disapproved or were uncertain are summarized in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

ALTERNATIVE GRADING SYSTEMS CHOSEN BY FACULTY

	Graduate Teachers		Non Graduate Teachers		Both		Chi Square
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
A-B-C-F	20	60.6	6	66.7	26	61.9	1.72
P-F	5	15.2	0	0.0	5	11.9	
Others	8	24.2	3	33.3	11	26.2	
Total	33	100.0	9	100.0	42	100.0	

Table XIV shows that about two-thirds or 61.9 percent of the respondents preferred the A-B-C-F grading system to other alternatives, 11.9 percent preferred the P-F system, and 26.2 percent chose "other" grading systems. The "other" grading systems, recommended by the instructors, were largely modifications of A-B-C-F and P-F. The only new suggestion was to give no grade if a student failed a course; this is similar to the grading system introduced at Yale College in fall, 1972, "where professors will be using grades of A,B,C,D, or nothing at all."[9]

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[9]Lawrence Fellows, "Elis Can Fail, But Yale Will Forget," New York Times, New York, October 10, 1972.

Comparison of Student and Faculty Reactions to H-P-F Grading System

TABLE XV

COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND FACULTY REACTIONS TO H-P-F GRADING SYSTEM

	Students		Faculty		Difference		
	No.	%	No.	%	(S - F) %	Chi Square	p
Approve	557	72.8	55	56.7	+ 16.1	14.8	.01
Disapprove	124	16.2	31	32.0	- 15.8		
Uncertain	84	11.0	11	11.3	- 0.3		
Total	765	100.0	97	100.0			

Although the majority of both students and faculty approved the H-P-F system, greater support came from the students: 72.8 percent students as compared to 56.7 percent faculty, a difference of 16.1 percent which was statistically significant. Disapproval was greater among faculty than students, 32.0 percent of the former as compared to 16.2 percent of the latter disapproved of H-P-F. The number of those who were uncertain were about the same in both groups.

The difference between faculty and students is widened when a comparison is made of the graduate teaching staff and the graduate students. 50.8 percent of the graduate staff, responding to the survey, approved of the H-P-F system, while almost three-fourths of the graduate student respondents supported the H-P-F system of grading.

SUMMARY

This report evaluates the H-P-F system, which was experimentally introduced in the fall, 1971 semester for one year, for grading in graduate education courses. The Lehman College Senate approved the request of the Department of Education to use this grading system with the mandate that a graduate student evaluation be carried out and the results reported back to the Committee on Graduate Studies as soon as possible in the fall, 1972 semester.

There are three parts to this evaluation:

1. Comparison of A-B-C-F and H-P-F systems in differentiating between the exceptional and average student performance
2. Student evaluation of the H-P-F grading system
3. Faculty evaluation of the H-P-F grading system

Comparison of the H-P-F and A-B-C-F Grading Systems

Grade distribution in graduate courses in education for 1970-71 with the A-B-C-F grading system was compared to the grade distribution in 1971-72 with the H-P-F system. In fall, 1970, 49.5 percent of all graduate grades were A's, whereas in fall, 1971, 20.6 percent were H's, a difference of almost 30.0 percent. This decline was found in all curricular areas in education. The Dean of Graduate Education characterized the experiment as "successful judging by the drop off in the number of 'highest possible grades' granted". The H-P-F system appeared to have achieved its purpose during the first semester of its use, namely to differentiate more sharply between exceptional and average student achievement in graduate courses in education.

The comparison of highest possible grades reveals that in spring, 1971 there were 53.0 percent A's, and spring, 1972 there were 35.3 percent H's, a difference of 17.7 percent. Although the gap between A and H grades was smaller in the spring, 1970 and 1971 semesters than in the fall, 1971 and 1972 semesters, the H-P-F system continued to discriminate.

Student Reactions to H-P-F System

A poll of graduate student assessment of the H-P-F system was conducted during the week of October 2, 1972. Questionnaires were prepared and distributed to 113 graduate classes. Only students who had been enrolled in graduate courses in education during the 1971-72 school year and had been graded under the H-P-F system were requested to complete the questionnaire.

Responses were received from 83 classes in all curricular areas, 73.5 percent of the total number. There were 765 respondents representing about 66.5 percent of the 1,150 eligible graduate students. The sample appeared to be representative of the curricular area offerings in education.

The responses to the four inquiries of the anonymous questionnaire are summarized as follows:

All respondents completed at least one graduate course prior to September, 1972; 24.7 percent completed one to two courses; 22.1 percent, three to four; 17.2 percent, five to six; and 36.0 percent, more than six.

The number of graduate courses graded H-P-F were as follows: one course, 22.6 percent; two courses, 23.9 percent; three courses, 16.1 percent; and four or more courses, 37.4 percent.

The H-P-F system was "approved" by 72.8 percent of the respondents. 16.2 percent "disapproved," and 11.0 percent were "uncertain."

Of the 208 students who "disapproved" or were "uncertain," 51.0 percent preferred the A-B-C-F system; 42.8 percent, P-F; and 6.2 percent, other systems such as student option of grading system and no grading.

Faculty Reactions to the H-P-F Grading System

The faculty of the Department of Education was polled during the week of October 9, 1972 by a questionnaire designed to determine their reactions to the H-P-F grading system.

Responses were received from 97 or 85.1 percent of the 114 staff members polled. These respondents consisted of 67 or 97.1 percent of the 69 who had taught graduate courses last year and had used the H-P-F system, and 30 or 66.7 percent of the 45 staff members who had not taught graduate courses last year and had not used the three point system. Thus, 30.9 percent of the respondents had had no experience with the H-P-F grading system, whereas 69.1 percent had used it and had taught an average of 2.5 graduate classes. The classes taught were distributed among all graduate curricular areas and were representative of TEP offerings.

It was found that 56.7 percent of the faculty "approved" the H-P-F grading system, 32.0 percent "disapproved," and 11.3 percent were "uncertain." However, slightly more than half of the instructors who had used H-P-F or 50.8 percent approved of it, while 70.0 percent of the faculty who had not used it gave it their approval--a difference that was not statistically significant. 38.8 percent of the graduate teachers "disapproved" of H-P-F as compared to 16.7 percent of the undergraduate instructors. Also, 10.4 percent of the graduate instructors as compared to 13.3 percent of the undergraduate instructors were "uncertain."

The alternative grading system which appeared to have the greatest support was the A-B-C-F grading system--60.6 percent of the graduate instructors and 66.7 percent of the undergraduate instructors favored it. Other grading systems recommended by instructors were largely modifications of A-B-C-F and H-P-F. Only one new suggestion was offered, namely, the system introduced at Yale College this fall in which professors issue grades of A, B, C, or D or nothing at all.